

Who Shrinks the Shrinks

by Motsie of Atlantis

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Summary: In Unexpected Connection, by GillianLSteele, Nell is dealing with her first lethal shooting. There she said, "I know I was I supposed to speak to Nate. I know he is a trained psychologist, but he hasn't had to kill someone. He can't know what I'm going through." Nate has been spending more and more time in the field. What happens if he has to take a life?

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****Who Shrinks the Shrinks****

****A/N:**** I was reading Unexpected Connection By: GillianLSteele about Nell dealing with her first lethal shooting. There she makes a comment, "I know I was I supposed to speak to Nate. I know he is a trained psychologist, but he hasn't had to kill someone. He can't know what I'm going through." Nate has been spending more and more time in the field, on loan to various other agencies. What would go through his mind if he would have to take a life?

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****Disclaimer:**** The characters and sets of NCIS: LA are all owned by CBS, Donald P. Bellisario, and Shane Brennan. I only own a copy of the DVDs from season 1-6. I do get to play with everyone, but they all have to be home by curfew.

****A/N 2: *****I have been informed that as long as I post chapters - even at a very irregular schedule - I am not hiatusing - a word that Deeks taught me - therefore, all of my stories will be posted on a very irregular schedule until further notice. I still need to have some medical procedures taken care of. Until they have been completed I have been told to spend limited time on the computer. I have no clue when the whole process may be done, or what I will have to go through to help work things out. Until that time, I will post when I

am able. When things have been successfully completed, and I am healed, I will again continue to post new chapters regularly. I am sorry if this disappoints people, but I have to take care of me so I can continue to write.**

**A/N 3: **I need to thank Sue for her great job of 'sorta' being my beta on this. Thanks also to Gina for her technical advice and being the other part of my 'sorta' beta. Without their help and encouragement, this story would not have seen the light of day.

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Who Shrinks the Shrinks

An Undisclosed City in Venezuela

Dr. Nate Getz had been in Venezuela, on loan to the CIA to help profile Geraldo Vega, an up and coming drug lord, who had a small following in the area. The agency wanted to know if he was going to accept being a lieutenant in the Colombian Norte del Valle Cartel, by merging his group, Los Ojos VacÃ-os [The Empty Eyes], with them, or if he thought he was big and smart enough to operate independently.

The agency had set up, what they had hoped, would be a long range undercover operation, with an observation post that was centered in a smaller city near the Colombian border. The five agents went in as two husband and wife teams and the brother of one of the women.

Their cover story was that they were there to check the viability of indigenous plants for the special imported food sections in US markets. The alliance that they represented, the California Renewable Exotic Edible Plants, or CREEP, was paying a few of the people surrounding the city, to raise some of these plants in small test plots, that the team members would visit once a week, to measure and examine the plants. The rest of the time they counted the trucks in the drug convoys coming from Columbia, and the number of planes taking off from a nearby private airstrip, with a cargo of drugs destined for the US market.

They had been there for five months now, gathering intel, but still had no clue what Vega was planning to do. Jose Atkins, the man in charge of the mission, wondered if they had missed the clues they were looking for, in the mass of information they already had. Maybe they were just too close to the problem to see the solution, and a fresh pair of eyes would uncover what they had missed. They put in a call for someone else to come down and check their work.

Dr. Nate Getz was in Bandar Seri Begawan, capital city of Brunei, having just finished running the required psychological reviews on the NCIS agents there. He also did a political assessment on the government. With all the turmoil and revolution going on in the Muslim world, the US government wanted to know if religious freedom would continue in this nation on the island of Borneo. An intensive study showed that religious diversity would not be a problem here, and the psychologist got new orders to head to Venezuela. His cover story was that he was Nicholas Booker, a supervisor at CREEP who wanted to check on the team's progress. It took him a full two days

to make the trip, since he was going in undercover and had to stick to commercial airlines, rather than a military flight that would get him there sooner. The day after he arrived, he and analyst Samantha Avery started to pour over the files the team had developed throughout their time there. Both of them spent long hours going over the files during the next three days.

The whole team was together in the compound having a late supper when it happened. Automatic weapon fire began to rake the headquarters from outside the building. The agents went for their weapons and headed for their previously assigned positions to defend the compound. Only the analyst, Samantha Avery, remained in the room with him, an extremely fearful look on her face. Nate retrieved his service weapon, then returned to find Sam still standing there.

"Sam, where are you supposed to go if something like this happens?" Nate asked her.

"The safe room is the computer room, I'm supposed to go there." she responded.

The sounds of the firefight echoed through the compound, as the two of them made their way there, and found places to hide.

For the next five minutes, the battle continued. One of the attackers made it to the room where the two of them were trying to remain out of sight. The guerrilla spotted Sam, cowering behind one of the desks, and aimed his weapon at her. Before he could pull the trigger, Nate used his service weapon to double tap him in the center mass, running those shooting instructions in his head, as his body complied. Both Sam and Nate watched the rebel, as he dropped to the floor, dead.

A few minutes later, Jose Atkins, the CIA leader, came in looking for them. He glanced down at the dead guerrilla laying there, and then up at Sam and Nate.

"You two okay?" he asked them.

Sam said, "Yeah," while Nate just nodded.

"With this one here, we got everyone that attacked us. We did lose Carlos Jacobson, and Tracy Newton was wounded, but it's not serious."

"What the hell was that all about?" Sam wanted to know.

"I have no idea," Atkins answered. "I don't know if we were made, and Vega thought we would just be no match for his men, or if it was one of Vega's lieutenants, trying to earn points with his boss, by doing it on his own. In either case, reinforcements might return any minute to try to finish the job. For this reason, we are going to shut this site down, and consider the mission compromised. Grab your go bags, and pile into the vehicles. We leave in three minutes."

They left Carlos' body in the compound; an armed marine detachment would claim it from the local police. Tracy was loaded in the back of the SUV, and Sam crawled in with her, carrying both their go bags. The rest of them tossed their go bags back there, then slammed the

hatch closed. Jose slid into the driver's seat, with Ryan Owens, their communication specialist and second in command, taking the other front seat. This left Nate sitting in the back seat all by himself.

They left the compound and headed for the main highway. Ryan had called in and gave them a short situation report by coded message. They were ordered to head for the airport in Caracas as fast as possible, without drawing attention to themselves.

Jose and Ryan decided each would drive for two hours before they would switch. The only time they would stop was when they needed gas. After that brief discussion, silence filled the vehicle, as they made their mad dash toward freedom.

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After about fifteen minutes into the trip, Nate began to feel his body start to come down from the adrenaline high, on which it had been functioning ever since the firefight started. His hand began to shake, as he played over the events in his mind. There was no hesitation on his part, when he pumped the two rounds into the back of the rebel who had burst in on them. Sure, the man had trained his weapon on Sam, with the intention of killing her. Nate knew that he had to stop him from his intended purpose. But he started to second guess himself, if he really had to kill him.

All the other options started to appear in his mind. He could have yelled out at him, startling him. But would that have really worked? The rebel might have passed up trying to shoot Sam, and instead, turning sideways and dropping down into a crouch, fired at him first. He might no longer have a shot, and then, with Nate out of the picture, the rebel could have killed Sam whenever he wanted.

He could have tried to wound him, aiming for his hand, arm, shoulder, knee, or leg, instead of concentrating on his center mass. But was he a good enough marksman to take a shot like that? He didn't think so. And again, if he missed, the rebel would be warned and the bullets would come his way.

He was faced with a split second, life and death situation. If he had hesitated just a split second longer, Sam would have been gunned down by the rebel. It was his life, or hers, and Nate chose to end the rebel's life and save the life of his companion. That is what he was trained to do as an NCIS agent out in the field. And he did everything exactly as he was trained to do. Now, why did he feel so guilty about taking the rebel's life?

How often had he worked with fellow agents, getting into their minds and helping them work through all of the problems that came to them when they experienced their first lethal shooting. And he was damn good at doing this.

The last one that he helped was Norman Riddle. Thirty-some years the man had with NCIS, and he never had to pull out his service weapon. But then, when he least expected it, he was embroiled in a situation where he had no choice. He had been tabbed as part of a last minute back up force to the main team in Seattle. As they were clearing an old, abandoned warehouse, his teammate missed one of the terrorists while clearing one of the rooms. Norman stuck his head in the doorway

just as the man was rising from his hiding position, fully intending on shooting his temporary partner. Norman didn't even have time to shout out a warning. He just fired, point blank, killing the terrorist. After being debriefed, the agent wondered if he could remain in his job, so overcome was he with grief and guilt. It took Nate several sessions, but the man remains an agent to this day.

Even someone as prestigious as the great Henrietta Lange readily admitted to his expertise in this area. When her political analyst, Nell Jones, had made her first service kill, and was suffering deeply from 'survivor's guilt', Hetty could have called in any psychologist she wanted to help the young woman. Even though the operations manager knew that Nate could not work with her professionally, because he had worked with her previously when Nell was younger, Hetty asked him to come in and talk to her 'as a friend.' Very few people knew that this was not the first time Nell took another person's life. She spent ten years in prison for killing her foster father, when he started to molest her sister. She suffered no guilt for her action then, and said so to the court. Nate had known about all this, and helped Nell work through it.

He thought about all the training he had received that brought him to this significant position. It is true that he had a lot of help along the way, but much of it was because of his own hard work and perseverance. Undergraduate work at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, with a double major in psychology and government, graduate work at Harvard, with his clinical work at Massachusetts General Hospital, and his PhD in Psychology at John Hopkins in Baltimore. For the most part, he was happy with the direction in which his life was headed, traveling the world and working with NCIS.

But that was before the events of today played themselves out in his life.

Now he started to question everything he had been taught, all the words that he embraced and held so dear in his life. These were the words and ideas that he passed on to those he worked with in situations like this. He ran them all through his mind, and sneered silently as he ticked off each one. When he was done, he truly wondered if the words he had pitched to others were real, or were they just a bunch of 'psycho-babble' that he was trained to use, that he could get these agents back on the job as quickly as possible. At one time, he thought he knew, but now that it had happened to him personally, he just didn't know and he found no help for himself in his words.

When he examined himself, he found more answers in his heart than his head. He was sorry he had ended the rebel's life. Even though Nate did not even know if the man had a family or not, he wondered if there was anyone to mourn his death. Surely there must be someone who would grieve over their loss. Just because the man fought for the drug lords, didn't mean that other people didn't care about him. One bad decision in his life did not necessarily make the rebel an evil man. If that would be true, then Nate would have to brand himself with the same title.

The more he sat there, all by himself, and thought about about the events today, the angrier he became. Right now, in addition to the

sorrow he felt for taking the man's life, the other major emotion that was running through his approach for dealing with this problem was hatred. He hated the rebel for the life the man chose for himself, getting involved in drug trafficking and not caring how many others he hurt or killed. That was completely evident, from the way the rebel had threatened Sam. He would have cut her down, and probably not felt any remorse for such an act.

Nate hated the man for his forcing him to make an instant decision, shoot to kill him or just let him do what he wanted. He had some hatred for the other people in the car with him, for allowing the man to get so far into their compound, that he could threaten the two people that should not have been on the front line and in the line of fire. There was even a tinge of hatred toward NCIS, because they never trained him to face situations like this. Hetty was included in that hatred, because she foolishly listened to his pleas to work out in the field, and senselessly granted him his wish.

Even though he had not made his official report yet, Nate knew that he would definitely hate the upcoming Internal Affairs investigation that he was going to have to go through. He knew what they were like because he had been involved in them before. But this time he would be on the other side of the table, answering all the questions, and sweating out the decision of whether he would be allowed back into the field again. If he should really get unlucky, he might get a hard-assed investigator leading the probe into the shooting. That person might even suggest Nate be brought up on criminal charges, especially one to whom he might have given an unfavorable psych evaluation. Maybe he would find out when they got to the airport in Caracas.

That is, if they ever got to the airport safely. They still might have been followed, or the rebels might have called ahead to block the road to stop them. Nate was glad that Atkins didn't follow strict protocols, and make him turn in his service weapon. Maybe it was because the CIA agent just wanted to make sure that there was enough firepower on their side to help them reach safety. Maybe it was for some other reason. Nate was sure of one thing, the man knew what the regs were, and did not forget he still had his SIG P228. Once they reached the airport, he knew he would have to surrender it to the investigating officer, until his shoot was declared good.

Both Atkins and Owens kept scanning the road behind them when they weren't driving. Owens was nearly going out of his mind, because he was ordered to observe a communications blackout, unless they were attacked. All of this just made Nate more nervous. He liked the familiar feel of his SIG where he could use it, but he really wondered if his emotions would let him take the shot, if the opportunity presented itself.

But their fears proved to be unfounded. As they neared the airport, Owens received a brief cryptic message, 'commerce 37'. his answer was equally brief, 'k'.

He turned toward Atkins and told him, "When we get to the field, take the commercial entrance. Find hanger 37, that's home tonight."

Atkins just looked at him and nodded.

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A doctor, nurse, ambulance, and NCIS agent, along with the regular complement of service personnel, were waiting for them in the hanger. Tracy Newton was lifted out of the back of the SUV and placed on a gurney. The doctor looked at her leg and determined she didn't have to be taken to the hospital. Her wound was a through and through, missing bone and muscle completely. With rest and rehabilitation, she would be as good as new.

Keon Walker, a black NCIS agent in his late thirties, had been flown into Caracas from Naval Station Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico. The CIA did not have a supervisor available who could get there to interview their people, and the Sub-director for Caribbean affairs had agreed to let the NCIS agent conduct the field interview. Walker did not feel comfortable collecting the service weapons from the CIA agents, and to tell the truth, doubted if they would give them up. Nate, however, immediately surrendered his when asked.

Pulling up a diagram of the compound on his computer, Walker started interviewing Atkins first and then Owens, followed by Newton and Avery, with Nate last. He split the screen and plotted their movements on the diagram, while typing out their statements on the other half. To make sure there was no confusion on what they said, when they were through, Walker let them read their statement, making any changes that they wanted. Then he sent them as encrypted emails to three separate people, the CIA Sub-director for Caribbean affairs, NCIS Director Vance, and SECNAV.

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A CIA team that had been holed up in the town of Valledupar, just over the border in Columbia, would visit the compound under the cover of night for their investigation. They would take infrared photos of the scene and forward them to the CIA Sub-director. If NCIS needed copies, they could get them from his office.

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After his interview with Walker, Nate was ordered to join him and board a C-2 Greyhound to fly back to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads. There the psychologist would face his IA investigators and maybe even undergo a psych evaluation. Nate was not looking forward to either of them.

They had been airborne for about ten minutes, when Walker turned to Nate and asked him, "This was your first official kill, wasn't it?"

"Does it show that much?" Nate wanted to know.

"It's not that hard to spot," Walker replied. "You talk about it almost apologetically, as if you did something wrong. If everything happened just the way you say it did, and I have to believe you because all the CIA agents corroborate your story, then you have nothing to worry about."

Nate bowed his head, and put both hands on the back of his neck. "How do you get past something like this?" he whispered.

"You let time," Walker said, "and the people you can trust help see you through it. You talk to the psychologist..."

At that Nate started laughing, almost insanely. "Don't you understand, Walker? I am a NCIS psychologist. I have all the answers for everybody else, but for myself, I have nothing at all. You know how depressing that is?"

"Maybe you just need a new perspective on it. You know that the same answers don't always work for everyone. My only advice to you is just sit down and work with them. Don't hold on to any of your preconceived ideas. Be open to what they tell you."

Nate just shook his head, and silence reigned in the COD for the next ten minutes. Finally he slowly looked up at Walker and asked, "When you've taken someone's life, do those feelings ever go away?"

"I wish I had the answers that you're looking for, Nate, but I don't. Memories like that don't ever really go away. They just get dull and fade as time goes on, but they are always there, waiting just under the surface, to be remembered one more time."

After a long pause, Nate looked at the man sitting beside him. "I just want to forget about it," he told him. "I don't want to remember it any more."

"I know you don't," Walker said, as he reached over and gave the psychologist's shoulder a gentle squeeze. "None of us do. I will always remember my first one. And maybe that's not a bad thing. If we ever forget them, if we are caught up in so much death that all our killings become blurred in our minds, so that we no longer can remember that first one, then it's time for us to get out. You have to hold on to the knowledge that you were protecting Avery and yourself, more than the fact you took another human life."

Nate mumbled, but Walker still heard him, "It wasn't fair. I felt like I really didn't have a choice."

Walker looked at him with a smirk on his face. "Who ever said that life was fair? We know it's not. And yeah, sometimes we don't have any choice in the things we do. That's when we rely on our training and our gut instincts, along with the fact that we're the good guys. And when we're done, we hope like hell that everything will work out, maybe not exactly the way we wanted, but with the least amount of fallout, damage, and injury to others."

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Nate spent the rest of the flight pondering the advice that Walker gave him. He knew that he could just go through the motions of his psych exam, and still get through it with flying colors. He had asked others these questions so often and knew all the correct answers.

But he also knew that if he did that, it would not help him with the way he felt right now. He would be stuck in this emotional rut, and that was not a place in which he wanted to remain.

So he vowed to himself that when he met with the psychologist, he would actually work with him, to find some way to deal with this, and

move on as best he could. He wanted, no, he needed to get better. It was not just so that he could go back and do his job, although that was important to him. The biggest reason was so that he could learn to live with himself.

The only question that remained for him was which shrink would be traipsing through his mind.

****FINIS****

End
file.